

be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY MONTH

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration and that the Senate proceed to S. Res. 285.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 285) designating September 2019 as "School Bus Safety Month".

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. CORNYN. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 285) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of July 25, 2019, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

EXECUTIVE SESSION—Continued

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume executive session and, notwithstanding rule XXII, the time between now and 3 p.m. be equally divided between the leaders and their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Indiana.

WHISTLEBLOWER APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, whistleblowers play a key role in holding the Federal Government accountable for waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, and illegal activity. It is therefore appropriate that even though Whistleblower Appreciation Day was yesterday, we take a moment to pause and thank the brave men and women who have the courage to speak up when they see ways to better or improve our government. I want to thank them for their efforts to ensure that our government never loses sight of why we are here—to serve the American people and to be good stewards of their resources and trust.

I was also proud to introduce legislation with Senator MAGGIE HASSAN of New Hampshire. Our bill ensures adequate protections for subgrantees—the folks on the firing line who are most important to revealing when some-

thing is not right. That needs to be protected in a way that is ensured so that they always feel comfortable coming forward.

In 1989, Congress approved the Whistleblower Protection Act, thereby expanding whistleblower protections for Federal employees and later expanding protections for individuals in certain private sector employment.

From time to time, it has been necessary for Congress to refine Federal whistleblower laws. We always want them to be working. In one such instance, Congress enhanced whistleblower protections as part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013 for Federal contractor, subcontractor, and grantee employees on a pilot program basis. The program worked well, and, in 2016, Congress saw fit to make the pilot permanent. It makes sense. This is how the process should work. Congress saw a problem, addressed it on a test basis, evaluated it to make sure it was working as it should, and moved to make the program permanent.

However, the subsequent amendments in 2016, to make sure the program was working, failed to guarantee subgrantees were recognized in the legislative text, as necessary, to make sure it would work on a technical basis. While 2016 amendments explicitly included Federal subgrantee employees, coordinated changes were not made in the statute's related sections.

I am proud to introduce this legislation with Senator HASSAN to close this gap because it needs to work in all cases. S. 2315, the Whistleblower Act, clarifies the scope of the protection statute specifically as to employees of Federal subgrantees who provide protected disclosures. Subgrantees are often in the best position to provide information regarding wrongdoing as to Federal subgrant funds. I am, therefore, pleased to play a small role in cleaning up our laws so they operate as they were intended—to protect whistleblowers.

Finally, we take whistleblowers seriously in my office. If anybody would like to assist, contact me through our whistleblower assistance line. One can email me at whistleblower@braun.senate.gov.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, over the past several weeks, we have seen numerous attempts by our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to take a serious issue and, frankly, I think, turn it into a political football. It is an issue on which the Presiding Officer and I have spent a lot of time looking at what we need to do, in our having served on the Committee on Intelligence and, in my case, on the Committee on Rules and Administration, to be sure that people have the maximum confidence that what happens on election day is exactly reflected in the results.

Our friends came to the floor last week and sought unanimous consent to make sweeping changes to the election laws of the country. Then they somehow suggested there was a conspiracy that anybody would say no to that. Unanimous consent means exactly that. It is what we do when we name a post office. It is what we do when we make decisions that are unanimously agreed to. It is usually all it takes to get that issue settled. It is not how we shape the laws that are at the heart of our democracy. It is also not what we do, in my opinion, when we try to make a point about that. In fact, one of the bills on which they sought unanimous consent had passed the House. It had received exactly one Republican vote in the House. So, clearly, it was not unanimously consented to over there and would not be unanimously consented to here.

This is about press releases, not policy. In fact, today, the President called for us to pass voter ID laws that would require voter ID in every State and a law that would have a paper trail in every State. Right now, I suppose, if I were to draft that bill and call for unanimous consent under the same standard, I should expect my friends on the other side to say: Oh, that is something that others say would help elections, so I should just be for that and be for that immediately. Of course, that would not be the case.

These attempts have all been brought to the floor on the basis of saving democracy—that this is what we need to do to save our elections. This is in the name of election security, but it is really not what it is about at all. Three of the bills were about campaign committees, which are managed by lots of laws and may need to be managed by more, but how you run a campaign committee is not how you secure what happens at the voting place on election day.

One of the proposals was for the Federal Government to secure the personal devices of Members of Congress and their employees. As the Presiding Officer and I know, one of the things we do on the Committee on Intelligence is to put a Fitbit, like this one, on the shelf before we go into a meeting. If you have a phone like this one, you put it on a shelf before you go into a meeting.

This law would say that the Federal Government should secure those personal devices of mine so there would be absolute security so that if they were to interact with a Federal system, there would be no damage done to that system. I guess it would also mean that if one of my children were to call me on his personal device, whether he lives at home or not—and I would, of course, take that call immediately—he would then have gotten into my personal device. Would the Federal Government need to secure that as well?

Even if it were appropriate for the Federal Government to do that for Members and their extended immediate networks, I am not sure it is possible.

I am certainly sure that it has nothing to do with election security. It might have something to do with the security of our system here in the Senate. Frankly, I think it might make it less secure, which is why I have chosen not to bring that bill up before our committee until I know more about it. I think it might make it less secure if everybody, without hesitation, thinks, well, somebody has looked at this personal device of mine and has secured it, so I can go into any of the secure systems in the Senate that I want to with this device and not have any sense that I might endanger that Senate system.

This doesn't protect the elections. There have been numerous UC attempts we have seen on plenty of other bills that have claimed to secure elections. One included a provision that would take away the authority of the States to determine their own processes for voter registration. I am not for that. I also think it is hard to make the case that it would secure elections.

In case you think it would, another one was to require every State to have online voter registration. I am pretty sure that this would make elections less secure.

We have talked about all of the infiltration of bad information out there on the internet, and one of these provisions to secure elections would require States to have online registration.

One was for there to be automatic voter registration, and another was for there to be same-day registration.

In the nonurban part of our State of Missouri, we didn't have voter registration in all elections until 1975 or so. The view was, well, in small towns and school district elections and all, they are going to know everybody, so they really don't need to have registration. Yet, finally, it occurred to somebody that one might just think one knows five people, and the bond issue might be decided by five people, so we would have voter registration. In fact, not only would we have it, but we would have it enough in advance that anybody could look at those voter rolls 28 days in advance and see if there were any question as to whether one were registered or not.

Other States have decided to have same-day registration, but one of these bills that would secure our elections would allow anybody to register to vote that day who would walk up to vote. If you think that works in your State, I am not really arguing you shouldn't do it, because if that is what the voters of that State believe to be the case, maybe it does. I am pretty sure it wouldn't work in every State. In revisiting that online voter registration again, I am sure that doesn't secure elections.

There was one proposal that was rejected in these bills to secure elections, that being, for every \$1 contributed at a certain level, there would be \$6 given to that campaign by the Federal Government. That is one of the secure election things that was rejected, that wasn't accepted by unanimous consent.

At this point, it does seem to me, if you are not willing to accept all of these things—there was sort of this “hair on fire” moment—or are not willing to accept anything somebody else says will secure elections, then somehow you are undermining the elections system. Yet we really undermine the system when we say this kind of thing helps it. Frankly, I have been watching this for a while, and that list of things I gave you has been on every Democratic wish list for about 20 years of what would be of advantage to them in the elections. Never before have they purported that these things have made elections more secure. They have just said it was a better system and more fair. It was obvious to them it would help them, and it was obvious to us it would help them. We haven't done it, and we are probably not going to do it right now.

There are people in this building who simply will not accept the fact that there is not a Federal solution to every problem. Sometimes if there is a Federal solution, it is not the best solution. Frankly, I think the diversity of the election system that we have is one of the strengths of the system. I may get back to that later, but that is what President Obama said in October of 2016. In fact, he said that we didn't have a Federal structure and that it made it really more difficult to impact our elections than if we had.

I believe everybody here clearly knows that State and local officials faced a significant threat from the Russians, particularly in 2016, that they had not faced before. One could probably add that the Russians, the Chinese, the North Koreans, and the Iranians could do very disruptive things for not much money. There is no question that the Russians affected our elections, but they have been trying to impact elections in Eastern and Western Europe for well over a decade. Why this would be a surprise to us is shocking to me and why, in 2016, we acted like we were totally flatfooted that, oh, the Russians would actually interfere with the elections just because they interfered in elections in a couple handful of countries in the previous decade. The world is pretty small when you get to that internet world we live in now.

A critical infrastructure declaration came from the Obama administration in October whereby, frankly, it terrified most State election officials that, suddenly, the Federal Government, with about 2 weeks left before the election, was going to Federalize a system that they were personally responsible for.

As for the Intelligence Committee that started this process—the Presiding Officer and I were both on it, and I am still on it—it released some key findings about what the Russians had done. The committee found that the Russians had worked hard to find the seams between which the Federal Government could be helpful to State

and local governments. They found that the FBI's and Department of Homeland Security's warnings to local officials came way too late in the process and were not well thought out. It scared the wrong people and confused more people when the FBI and the DHS did what they did. While there is no question that both of those agencies have redoubled their efforts to build trust with the States and deploy resources to help secure elections, we have to remain vigilant to see they continue to do that. Even when the Presiding Officer and I worked on a bill together last year, the local officials continued to have some problems with it. I know I said at the time that I had believed we had been doing everything this bill would do. I am not sure we would still be doing it 10 years from now, so we need to memorialize that. I haven't significantly changed my view on that, but I haven't changed my view, more importantly, that we are doing what we need to do now.

Congress needs to be vigilant. We have to insist that State and local officials have the clearance levels they need. Frankly, let me say this too. On that topic, I am not sure you can legislate that. I am not sure you can legislate “here is what you have to be willing to tell State and local officials.” I am not sure you can ever put that in writing, but you can ask them what they are telling people. I talked to one of our State election officials just last week.

I asked: How is this going?

He said: Well, everything we request seems to be one level above the security clearance I have.

Too many of the things we ask meet that criteria. We are going to have to insist that this not be the case. While this is not likely to be solved by legislation, I think it can be solved by congressional oversight and inquiry.

The Intelligence Committee also found that Russian activities demand renewed attention to vulnerabilities in the U.S. voting infrastructure. I certainly agree with that. We even said in that report we should replace out-of-date machines with improved ways to vote and improved cybersecurity. I think that is happening.

Election officials have been taking this threat very seriously. DHS, the Department of Homeland Security, has reported that all 50 States and more than 1,400 local jurisdictions have signed up for the cyber threat information sharing program. We have had reports to the Senate on that, and the Committee on Rules and Administration has had hearings on that. The Committee on Intelligence has asked repeatedly about that. The monitoring sensors that help to detect malicious activity have been deployed to election infrastructure in most States.

Remember that, in 2016, we had a cyber defense, but we didn't have a cyber offense. Early in the Trump administration, I remember people being asked in an open hearing: Do you have

any direction now to be fighting out there—to have a cyber offense? That was about 5 months into the Trump administration.

The person said: No.

You would think that, somehow, the old cyber offense had been turned off. In fact, there had been no cyber offense.

Sometime in 2017, the cyber fighters were given what they needed, and they are out there helping. They are fighting back too. We had a report on that just recently of which all of the Senators are aware.

One of the chief State election officials in terms of that cyber war said that in their system there are about 100,000 attempts every day to scam the voter registration system and see if you could possibly get in.

I don't know how many thousands of those might be from foreign actors. I suspect a majority of them are from people who just say: Let's see if I can get into the system. But we should assume all 100,000 are from somebody who wants to do something wrong, and I think the States are getting the help they need to fight that back.

We have seen States use equipment that didn't have a backup so that when the election was over, you could count something individually and that the voter would have been able to look at and get their hands on and recount. As a matter of fact, if you ask me, the best proof you can have is a backup, a ballot that could be counted—a ballot where if I vote in Missouri, my voting machine generates something that I look at and then I put that in the ballot box and it is counted at the polling place. But if it ever had to be counted again, if there was any question about that precinct counter, they can go back and open that ballot box and count them again.

On election day in 2016, and even in 2018, there were still four States that didn't have that system anywhere in their States. There are a couple of other States that have a partial system and four States that didn't have it. Delaware has it in place for this year's election. Georgia announced just last week that they had awarded a contract to replace their equipment that will be in place for the 2020 elections and have an auditable ballot trail. South Carolina made a similar announcement last month. The fourth State, Louisiana, is working through a contracting bidding process right now. Whether they are in place by 2020 or not in Louisiana I don't know, but I know they will be in as soon as they can reasonably be in and not confuse voters.

Congress has to continue to move States to do that. We need to look and see what happened with the States that were given \$380 million. In 2018, 49 States took the money immediately. One State, Minnesota, has some glitch with their legislature so they don't have their money yet. But of the \$380 million that States have, they have only spent 25 percent of it. So there is

still \$285 million for which States have to do the kinds of things that the Congress thinks States should be doing.

Now, there may be some States that have already spent all of their money and need more. That is something that, in the appropriations process, I am sure we will look at again, just like that \$380 million came through the appropriations process.

As I recall, the Presiding Officer was pretty involved in that discussion at the time.

The Federal Government's role isn't to run elections for the State, but it certainly has a place in trying to be a valued partner, ensuring that the States have all the help they need.

In fact, I believe that a larger Federal role requiring a one-size-fits-all approach to the election would be a big mistake. I am not for federalizing the elections.

I spent 20 years as an elections official, either as the individual responsible for elections in the third-most populous county in our State or the chief elections official as the secretary of State. In 20 years of doing this, I guarantee you that the person on the ground, generally elected by the voters for whom he or she is trying to secure the election that day, is intensely interested in that election going well and people's having confidence in it.

There is very little kicking the buck up to some Federal official in a far-away place and saying: Well, we can't prepare for that because we haven't been told we could prepare for that.

Public confidence in elections is fundamental. It is the central thread in the fabric of democracy. Elected officials take it seriously when they are elected to do this job or supervise this job, just like appointed officials and boards of elections or election commissioners do.

That system would not be improved if it was directed from Washington, DC, in a one-size-fits-all world.

These public servants undertake an important job, and they understand it is an important job. We need to support them. We are supporting them.

We need to have oversight. There may be a time when that oversight has produced a system that is so finely honed that we are ready to make it permanent, but every time you put something in law permanently, you reduce a lot of your flexibility to insist that something be done differently that needs to be done right now.

Both the Intel Committee report—and both Senator WARNER and Senator BURR have done a good job at keeping our committee on a bipartisan, non-partisan track in this report—and former FBI Director Mueller focused on the insidious efforts to confuse voters. This is a much bigger question than what we could do at the government level about elections security.

Let's not confuse that certain fight about bad information that is out there with a fight about whether our elections are secure and what happens on election day.

Frankly, much more attention on what we can do about information is out there. Put people on alert. You know, sometimes even your political opponent says things that aren't true, and they don't have to be Russian to do that. People need to be on alert about information that is out there, but they also don't need to be scared to death that somehow we are not taking seriously the important moment of democracy when people decide.

I believe we are doing that. I am committed to it. I believe the Senate is committed to it. I think this effort to make everything that might advantage one side on an election security issue is something that people need to be thoughtful about, and it needs to stop.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the need to hold the pharmaceutical industry accountable for putting profits before the health and well-being of our people and our communities.

I know that my colleague, Senator BROWN from Ohio, came to the floor earlier this week to call out bad actors in the pharmaceutical industry who have fueled our country's substance misuse crisis, and I am grateful for Senator BROWN's leadership in calling attention to this issue, and I join him in the effort.

We are constantly learning more and more about the unconscionable ways that pharmaceutical companies fueled the substance misuse crisis—a crisis that is killing more than 100 people a day in the United States.

Recent data released by the Drug Enforcement Administration showed that between 2006 and 2012, just 6 years, companies distributed 76 billion pills of oxycodone and hydrocodone throughout the country, including 290 million pills that were sent to New Hampshire, a State with only 1.3 million people. That works out to about 30 pills per person per year in the Granite State.

As they distributed those unfathomable amounts of opioids, pharmaceutical companies pushed these drugs with deceptive marketing tactics, despite the known risks of addiction, to maximize their profits. One of these tactics even included pushing the unproven concept of pseudoaddiction. This false claim asserted that patients showing signs of addiction weren't actually addicted but instead needed even higher doses of opioids. The solution that these scam artists pushed to address addiction was to encourage the prescribing of even more opioids. So instead of providing actual addiction treatment to those suffering from substance use disorder, some patients just received more drugs.

That kind of strategy enabled the pharmaceutical industry to dole out those billions of doses of opioids and profit enormously from it, leaving in

their wake an opioid crisis that is devastating communities.

Outrageously, as they have aggressively pushed doctors to prescribe these opioids, a tax loophole has enabled Big Pharma to write off the cost of television ads that blanketed the airwaves, encouraging more and more people to seek opioids from their doctors for pain relief, oblivious to the harm that these drugs could do. I have joined with Senator BROWN, as well as Senator SHAHEEN, on legislation to close that loophole and end taxpayer subsidies for drug ads, and I am going to continue to push for transparency from these companies.

In addition to the devastating impact that Big Pharma has had in fueling the substance misuse crisis, the industry has also hurt patients by massively increasing the cost of prescription drugs.

One of the top issues I hear about from people in New Hampshire is that affording lifesaving medications is becoming more and more out of reach, and high drug costs are too often forcing seniors and families to make agonizing decisions.

No one should have to decide between buying their prescriptions and heating their home or putting food on the table, but these are the types of choices Americans are devastatingly having to make, all the while big pharmaceutical companies are reporting profits that are higher than ever. We need to change this system, bring down costs, and hold Big Pharma accountable.

Last week, the Finance Committee moved forward with bipartisan legislation to begin to take on Big Pharma and lower prescription drug prices. This bill would cap out-of-pocket costs for seniors on Medicaid Part D and crack down on pharmaceutical companies that raise drug prices higher than inflation.

It is a really big deal that a bill to take on the pharmaceutical industry in a meaningful way advanced out of committee on a strong bipartisan vote. Pharma did everything they could to try to kill and weaken this bill in committee, and they will keep trying. I am really encouraged that we have gotten this far. That is no small accomplishment. We will continue working with colleagues from both sides of the aisle to get it across the finish line.

At the heart of the issue with Big Pharma is the blind pursuit of profits at the expense of people's health and wellbeing. Representatives from the pharmaceutical industry have told us often how important innovation is and how much innovation costs because they say they want to save lives and innovation is critically important.

In my own family, like so many across our country, medical innovation has been critical not only for saving life but to improve the quality of life. Our son Ben regularly has a compression vest that helps clear his lungs without the incredibly labor intensive respiratory therapy that we used to

have to do. He is able to get nutrition through a feeding tube that runs smoothly, steadily through the night so that he can have the kind of nutrition he needs.

Innovation in pharmaceuticals have also helped Ben improve his quality of life, and the combination of pharmaceutical innovation and medical device innovation means that a baclofen pump inserted in Ben's abdominal cavity helps his muscles to relax.

But if innovation is about saving lives, then, how did we get to a point of crisis that started from the drugs that they produced? How did we get to a point where many patients can't even afford the lifesaving prescription that pharma promotes?

It seems that, at least for some pharmaceutical companies, they only want to save lives when it makes them money or when it gives them an excuse not to restrict their profits.

From the substance misuse crisis to the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs, this body has failed to hold Big Pharma accountable for far too long. That must change, and I am committed to working with anyone who is serious about finally acting to put patients first.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO CHERYL VENECHUK

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, it is the time of week again when I come to the floor to recognize a very special person in my State—someone who I believe helps to make Alaska the best State in the country. We refer to this person as our Alaskan of the Week. It is one of my favorite times of the week because I get to brag about my State and brag about my fellow Alaskans and constituents. I think the pages enjoy these stories about Alaska and what we are doing up there.

This week, that person is Cheryl Venchuk. She is our Alaskan of the Week. She is a wife, a mom, a grandmother, an active member of her community in Healy, AK, which is in the interior of Alaska, and a woman who is very active not just in her community but in her chosen profession. She is a proud member of Laborers Union Local 942 in Fairbanks. That is part of the construction union, Laborers' International Union, LIUNA.

Many people know it for its great men and women across our country—one of the biggest construction building trades in North America. These are men and women who like to go out and build stuff—roads, pipelines, mines, build things. These are the type of Americans who made our country great.

Let me talk about Cheryl's life—about raising her five children in Healy, about her job, and about all she does for her community, which is a lot. I certainly think she personifies the kind of self-sufficiency, toughness, kindness, and independent spirit that Alaska and Alaskans are known for,

not just in Alaska but really throughout the country and the world. She personifies it.

Let me tell you a little bit about Cheryl's life. She was originally from the Midwest—Michigan. When she was about 23 years old, a friend of hers, Tom Bodett—who was a high school friend and eventually became the voice of Motel 6's motto, "We'll leave the lights on for you"—told her that Alaska was a good place to make a living and raise a family. So Cheryl and her husband Tim, with a child on the way, moved to a beautiful part of Southeast Alaska, a community called Petersburg, which is a beautiful fishing community in the southeast part of our State.

They settled there. They made friends. They began to raise a family. She worked at the local cannery, at the daycare, at the grocery store. She loved Petersburg. We all love Petersburg. I encourage people watching or watching on TV, when you visit Alaska, make sure to make that part of your stops.

Eventually, three kids later, Cheryl and her husband Tim moved north for Tim's work as a surveyor for Usibelli Coal Mine in Healy, AK. That is about 100 miles southwest of Fairbanks in the interior.

Usibelli is another great story in Alaska. Several generations of Usibelli family members have been producing coal for Alaska and the world, and they are still doing it—a great company, great families.

What did Cheryl find in Healy? Certainly another welcoming community, but a lot smaller, with a lot fewer amenities than she found in Petersburg.

So as she does, Cheryl rolled up her sleeves, and along with other young mothers in the area, she got to work to create a community that her children—eventually five children—and all the other children and families could enjoy in interior Alaska.

"We made stuff happen," Cheryl said. They started a daycare. They started Boy Scout and Brownie troops. They made sure hungry children got a hot lunch. They went around town picking up cans and started a recycling effort before recycling was even the rage. They helped build an ice rink for the kids to play hockey on. They even went so far as to haul the water for the rink in a truck and then spread it out to form ice. She mentored countless kids and always had time for her five kids.

This is what one of her children said about her: You have a hockey team that needs a hot meal? Call Cheryl. You need food for a wedding? Call Cheryl. Your kid is in trouble? Call Cheryl. You need something built? Call Cheryl.

Every community has a Cheryl—the backbone, the go-to person—who is usually unsung. We all know someone like that, and they make our communities so strong and caring, and in

many ways these kind of people are exactly what my "Alaskan of the Week" series of speeches is all about. So it is very appropriate we are talking about her right now.

When Cheryl was in her mid-forties, with her kids settled and in college, like a modern-day homesteader, she yearned for the next challenge. One day, she saw a group of workers doing road construction—hard, but very important work—and she thought, I can do that. Soon, she became a proud member of Alaska Laborers Local 942. That was almost 20 years ago. Her hard work, along with fellow laborers, is seen all across the State of Alaska, wind farms, trails, roads, bridges, and pipelines.

Many people talk about the great natural wonders in Alaska, and we have so many, but the manmade wonders are also remarkable—bridges, roads slicing into giant mountains, oil rigs, mines—and she and her fellow laborers have done so much to build up that part of the State.

She is a strong advocate for anybody who decides to work in the building trades, and she is particularly focused on women in the construction and building trades and recruiting them for these good jobs. She said: These are good jobs. They are good-paying jobs, and they build confidence. It is a great way to make money and to learn how to use your hands and of course to give back to your community.

To that end, she and her daughter Halle created, at their own expense, an Alaska "Women in the Trades" promotional calendar. The calendar features women of all ages who are employed as heavy equipment operators, welders, truckdrivers, tree trimmers, and on and on and on. With her own money, she put this calendar together.

She drops these calendars off at laundromats, schools, cafes, union halls, churches, and always keeps a few on hand to give to women who might need a new way of thinking about a career, who might need hope. She also gives them to people she just runs into—people like me. I was out in Fairbanks, AK, a couple weeks ago in the O'Reilly Auto Parts parking lot, and bumped into Cheryl and her daughter Halle, and I got one of these.

This calendar, Alaska Women in the Trades, is a great calendar with a couple of inspirational quotes:

Nothing is impossible. The word itself says, "I'm possible."

Get it? Pretty clever.

How about another one:

Do something today that your future self will thank you for.

Think about that, pages. It is good advice, even for Senators.

This is the kind of work she does, on her own dime, giving this kind of inspiration to her fellow Alaskans.

My team and I have gotten many emails from Cheryl's five children over the past few days, all of them talking about what a great mother she is, how giving, caring, hard-working she is,

how she is a hero to all of them, and how she is an inspiring example. Let me quote from one of the emails.

Her daughter Emmaline Hill, who, by the way, signed up for the U.S. Marine Corps when she was 18, then went on to graduate from Notre Dame, got her commission in the Marine Corps, and now is stationed in Japan as a major in the U.S. Marines—here is what she said about her mom:

My mom believes in people, especially those who have a hard time believing in themselves or don't think they are worthy of it. She is a rugged champion for the underdog and a tireless advocate for employing Alaskans and building our communities through volunteerism and action.

That is a beautiful testament to her mom from her daughter who is a major in the Marine Corps in Japan.

We are going to be going into our August work session. I am going to be back home in Alaska the whole time. We are going to be coming up on Labor Day, a very important holiday. I think it is important, when we are thinking about Labor Day, to think about people like Cheryl, her fellow laborers, and particularly the women who are doing this kind of hard work. You don't always think about that in terms of the construction and building trades, but they do great work.

So, Cheryl, thank you for all you have done. Thank you for your hard work, your inspiration, your dedication and faith, your indomitable spirit, and your example to your kids, to your fellow Alaskans, and now to Americans, as we congratulate you for being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATION OF ELIZABETH DARLING

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, in the coming hours, the Senate could take up the nomination of Elizabeth Darling to serve as Commissioner for Children, Youth, and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services. If she is confirmed to that role, she would be a key official overseeing the foster care system.

I previously had a hold on Ms. Darling's nomination, and I am going to begin my remarks by saying my hold was never about her personally or about concerns with her qualifications. In fact, I believe she is qualified for the position. I placed a hold on her nomination because of serious problems at the Department of Health and Human Services affecting child welfare policies that would fall in her area of jurisdiction if she is confirmed. I think this involves a matter the distinguished Presiding Officer of the Senate might be particularly interested in at this point.

I authored, with the former Finance Committee Chair, Senator Orrin Hatch, landmark families legislation called the Family First Prevention Services Act.

Family First, that Chairman Hatch and I authored, is a once-in-a-generation bipartisan update of child welfare

laws in America, inspired to a great extent by Marian Wright Edelman, the head of the Children's Defense Fund. The implementation of that law, in my view, is moving too slowly.

Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services followed through on a request from me and a group of colleagues from both parties and both Chambers to open up the availability of prevention programs for States that Chairman Hatch and I felt so strongly about under Family First. This was an important first step, and, if Ms. Darling is confirmed, I expect to see the Department take more.

What I would like to address for a few minutes, though, is a deeply discriminatory policy change that has been made by the Trump administration in the child welfare system. Until the Trump administration intervened, Health and Human Services regulations explicitly banned religious discrimination in federally funded Social Services programs, discrimination that should be barred by our core constitutional protections. Unfortunately, under this administration, that safeguard is no more.

This year, the Trump administration has set a precedent that foster care agencies that receive Federal dollars can turn away qualified prospective foster parents simply because they are Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Mormon, or any other faith, or simply because they are nonbelievers.

What this is all about, in short, is a green light for taxpayer-funded discrimination on the basis of religion. It stems from a case involving Miracle Hill Ministries, a foster agency in South Carolina. Miracle Hill is a faith-based social service organization—the largest provider of foster care services in South Carolina. It serves around 15 percent of the State's foster care population. I have no reason to doubt that Miracle Hill has a lot of wonderful staff and volunteers who wish to do a great deal of good work.

Last year, the Governor of South Carolina asked the Department of Health and Human Services for a waiver that would allow Miracle Hill to continue receiving taxpayer dollars despite its practice of turning away qualified foster parents based solely on their religious beliefs. In effect, it was a request for a loophole to evade the Federal policy banning religious discrimination. The Department of Health and Human Services OK'd it.

At a time—the Presiding Officer of the Senate and I have talked about this—when there are too many vulnerable kids and too few safe foster homes in America, the Trump administration actually gave the largest foster care organization in South Carolina permission to turn away prospective foster parents because of their faith.

This is not an academic matter. Let me give an example of the consequences. In 2018, Beth Lesser—a woman who unintentionally brought this issue to light—went to Miracle

Hill Ministries to volunteer as a foster mentor. Before she moved to South Carolina, she was a foster parent in Florida. You would think any foster care organization would be thrilled to have Ms. Lesser walk through their door—an experienced foster care parent coming to volunteer her time, her energy, and her love—but during orientation training, Miracle Hill found what they consider to be a problem: Ms. Lesser, like me, is Jewish. After Miracle Hill discovered Ms. Lesser's religion, they quickly turned her away.

Ms. Lesser is not the only person to experience this discrimination. Another was Aimee Madonna, who grew up in a foster care home and has three kids of her own. She contacted Miracle Hill and volunteered to open her home in the screening process. But when Miracle Hill learned that Ms. Madonna is Catholic, she got turned away too. She was devastated by the decision. In February, she sued the State of South Carolina and the Department of Health and Human Services over this unconstitutional discrimination. I commend her for fighting for her rights, and I believe she speaks for people of so many faiths whom I mentioned earlier.

I do want to explain why I find this precedent the Trump administration has set to be so objectionable, starting with the most obvious.

It is horrendous policy because it is going to hurt vulnerable kids all across this country, particularly if and when the Trump administration hands out more waivers in more States. If they do it this way, it is going to reduce the number of safe and loving foster homes available to youngsters in the child welfare system. That is the wrong way to go.

This policy is going to limit the diversity of foster homes and foster parents and growing up around people of different views and philosophies and religions. Diversity is important for kids. That is particularly important for LGBTQ youth, who make up one in five kids in foster care. There are homes where LGBTQ kids are not safe. They benefit from the chance to grow up in these more inclusive environments, where there are more diverse families who respect their sexual orientation and their gender identity.

It raises troubling questions about what is going to happen to children who were raised outside of evangelical Christianity before they entered the child welfare system. What is going to happen to a Jewish kid or a Muslim kid or a Mormon kid who is placed in a home where they are considered heretics?

This is a personal matter for me. That kid could have been me. I was so proud of my parents. They fled the Nazis in the thirties. Not all got out. All my dad—just about the most red, white, and blue fellow around—wanted to do was serve in our Army so he could drop propaganda pamphlets on the Nazis, telling them they ought to give up. You can read about my dad,

Peter Wyden, in the Holocaust Museum. I am so very, very proud of my dad.

I thought about, for example, what might have happened if my parents had died in a car crash when I was 12 years old and I had been put in one of these evangelical families through a foster agency that discriminates. I could have been told that everything my wonderful, patriotic, Jewish parents had taught me to believe was wrong; that my parents—that my dad, who was honored in the Holocaust Museum—that his beliefs were sinful. It would have added a lot more difficulty to a situation that was already traumatic.

The thought that children who have lost their parents could have another part of their identity stripped away is appalling. That religious discrimination in particular, that fundamentally un-American act—the idea that it is going to be propped up with Federal tax dollars is just wrong.

In my view, what the Trump administration has done with the South Carolina waiver is unconstitutional. I also believe it is the latest iteration of a much larger assault on individual religious liberty.

From a legal perspective, the Department of Health and Human Services justifies its discriminatory waiver by pointing to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, what is known as RFRA. Here is the problem: That law was intended to stop religious discrimination, not promote it. In this case, however, the administration is interpreting that law to protect only the religious freedom of Miracle Hill, not the freedom of Jewish or Catholic or Muslim or Buddhist individuals who want to become foster parents in South Carolina.

HHS's waiver disregards the establishment clause in the First Amendment of the Constitution, which prohibits the government from "respecting an establishment of religion." This is a Federal agency using taxpayer dollars to elevate some religions above others. That is unconstitutional every way you cut it.

The consequences at this point are limited to one State, but because of this precedent, that is one too many. It only takes one small step to set a harmful, dangerous precedent that will change everything. There are already rumors that HHS plans to turn this waiver into a nationwide policy. Make no mistake about it—that would be nationwide religious discrimination.

The consequences of an action like that would reach far beyond our child welfare system. It is not much further down the road before out-and-out discrimination against people of particular faiths, gender identities, and sexual orientations under the guise of religious freedom bleeds into other areas of American life. These debates are going to keep hitting the courts, and they are going to keep confronting the Congress. The Trump administration, Republican lawmakers, and Republican judges are ensuring that will happen.

I mentioned at the outset that this debate is tied to a nomination the Senate may take up today—we will see about later in the week. It involves the Commissioner on Children, Youth, and Families at Health and Human Services. I made that judgment, after a lot of reflection, that I am not going to stand in the way of that vote. I believe Ms. Elizabeth Darling is qualified. But in making that judgment, I was not willing to let today pass without sounding an alarm on a very dangerous precedent the Trump administration has set in this field. This is about the prospect of State-sponsored religious discrimination. In this case, it is going to come down hardest on vulnerable kids in our country. I believe it is clear that what is happening is unconstitutional.

I will close by saying again that there is bipartisan interest in improving our child welfare system. The distinguished Presiding Officer of the Senate is from Utah. I wish he could have seen Chairman Hatch and me work together on Families First. As you know, when Chairman Hatch got enthused about something, he was really enthused.

Marian Wright Edelman came to both of us. This had been her dream for 30 years, to try some fresh approaches in terms of helping these kids. In effect, what Families First does is it creates a third option. You have kids in homes where a parent might have gotten caught up in drugs or alcohol. We can get them some help. There is the foster care option. We have some very good foster care facilities in this country, and we have some that aren't exactly so great. So what Chairman Hatch and I said and what Democrats and Republicans on the Finance Committee said and what eventually the Congress on a bipartisan basis said was "We are going to do better by these vulnerable kids," and we created a third option.

One of them is built on a dream that I was part of. Back when I was director of the Gray Panthers, we were advocating for something called kinship care where grandparents could play a bigger role in stepping in and trying to help these vulnerable families, where maybe if a son had gotten in trouble with the law or a daughter-in-law had problems with alcohol and the like, the grandparent could help out.

Under Families First, Chairman Hatch, a Republican, and I, a Democrat, said: We are going to try to help those families. We are going to try to give them help. If you have a son who has had problems with alcohol and drugs, they are going to be able to get some help. The grandparents can step in and get some help. We are going to create more options for the most vulnerable families and most vulnerable youngsters in America.

We were moving forward. We were moving forward to be able to say—and this, of course, is not driven from Washington, DC; it is driven at the

State level. The Presiding Officer of the Senate is a former Governor. We were moving forward. Now we have the Trump administration seeking to move backward.

There are nearly half a million kids in foster care in this country. Democrats and Republicans ought to keep building on the work that Chairman Hatch and I—and I was proud to be his partner, with him as the chairman, in this effort to help those kids stay safe and get ahead in life. Now the Trump administration is spending taxpayer dollars not to help those kids but to promote discrimination. That is not the way to help these kids, not the way to help these families. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in opposing these policies of discrimination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL AUNDRE PIGGEE

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize a remarkable Arkansan at the end of a 38-year Army career.

LTG Aundre Piggee, who will retire in September, is the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army for Logistics. His nearly four-decade career has taken him literally all over the world, but his roots are and always have been in Arkansas.

The general was born in Stamps, AR, which is a small town in Lafayette County with fewer than 3,000 people. The son of a World War II Army veteran, the general didn't have his sights set on a career of military service from a young age. After graduating from high school, he chose to go to the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, which is about 2½ hours from home. He was a smart kid, so he received an academic scholarship to attend school.

There was no real reason for him to choose to go into the ROTC. In fact, according to him, the only reason he entered the Army ROTC was because the school allowed him to substitute it for an otherwise mandatory physical education class that would have required him to walk all the way across the campus. That seemingly mundane decision to save himself a few steps each day and maybe allow him to sleep in a few more minutes ended up being a life-changing decision for him. It set him on a path to an extraordinary career that he probably couldn't have dreamed of at the time.

Years later, the general served in jobs in Fort Hood, TX; Seoul, South Korea; Kaiserslautern, Germany; MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, and many other places. He deployed to Ku-

wait, Bosnia, and Iraq. He commanded thousands of soldiers and managed an \$11 billion Army portfolio. He led capacity-building efforts in Iraq and headed train-and-equip missions in Syria. He also directed logistics works in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. For his exemplary service, the general earned the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Distinguished Service Medal, and many other recognitions.

Throughout all of his great accomplishments and prominent positions, he has maintained a strong connection to his alma mater and his Arkansas roots.

For his work with and on behalf of his school, the current chancellor at UAPB, Laurence Alexander, said of the general:

He not only serves as a beacon of light and hope to our university and our community, but also to our state and our country. He continues to positively impact the lives of many, as well as inspiring a new generation of future military leaders.

For all of his accomplishments, the general was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame last year. Now he has decided that it is time to take off his Army uniform and pursue his next adventure with his wife, Kassi.

The general has risen to such incredible heights during his career. He is a hero in the sense of his outstanding military service, but more importantly, he is a hero in the sense that when you talk about duty, honor, country, and integrity, he is the guy who is a great example for all of us, one of the best we can find and look to. I am so proud to call him a fellow Arkansan and a friend. On behalf of all Arkansans, I wish him and his wife, Kassi, much happiness in the next chapter of their lives.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IOWA

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, with August just around the corner, countless Iowans are preparing to fill up their gas tanks—many with Iowa-grown E15—and take to our scenic highways for one last summer road trip. I can tell you one thing: I will be hitting the Iowa roadways myself, and I really cannot wait, folks. Throughout the month, I will be continuing on what I call my 99 County Tour, an annual tradition where I visit each and every one of Iowa's 99 counties. I will be logging hundreds of miles and speaking with thousands of Iowans.

It doesn't get any better than heading back home, getting out of this DC swamp, and talking with folks about the issues that matter most to them—like solutions to lower prescription

drug prices, policies to help our farmers and small businesses thrive, and efforts to cut wasteful spending and to make them squeal here in Washington.

So far, this year, my tour has brought me to over 50 Iowa counties, and I am aiming to visit another 30 or so before Labor Day. I will be crisscrossing the State, hosting townhalls and visiting the small businesses, farms, plants, and everyone else that are currently creating jobs and contributing to Iowa's current economic boom and record unemployment.

Meeting with and hearing from my fellow Iowans is one of the best and most important parts of my job. Our elected officials should always be out there listening to the people we work for. It is our job, and it really does make us more effective lawmakers.

For Iowans and folks across the Nation planning to hit the road this August, I hope you will take advantage of all that Iowa has to offer. With 99 counties, it means 99 unique communities for road warriors and families to visit and enjoy.

There are national treasures like the Effigy Mounds National Monument, a sacred site that is located in Allamakee and Clayton Counties, featuring more than 200 American Indian mounds. There are historic gems like the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site in Cedar County and Lewis and Clark State Park in Monona County.

I am sure folks will be willing to fill their social media feeds with one-of-a-kind Iowa attractions like the American Gothic House in Wapello County, the world's largest concrete gnome, in Story County, and the famed Field of Dreams in Dubuque County.

And who could forget the Iowa State Fair, truly the best State fair in North America and the crown jewel of Iowa attractions, with everything from the butter cow to peanut butter and jelly on a stick, hot beef sundaes, and, of course, good old-fashioned hotdogs. In fact, the Iowa State fair lists over 69 foods on a stick. That is right. It is on a stick, folks. You can try that at the fair this August.

But while you are out on the road, there are a few things that you will not be able to avoid. First and foremost, it is Democrats running for President. Folks, they are everywhere in Iowa. You will not miss them. You also can't avoid Casey's Pizza. Why would you want to? That is my question.

Now, inside the DC swamp, people may turn their nose up at gas station pizza—that is what it is, Casey's Pizza—but Iowans know it doesn't get any better than pizza from Casey's.

One more thing Iowans will not be able to avoid on the roads this August is me. So, as I am out on my 99-county tour this August, if you happen to see me at a townhall or at a local business or organization or maybe even gassing up my Harley-Davidson at Casey's or waiting in line for a slice of pizza, please be sure to stop and say hello.

So, folks, hit the roads this August. Make that one last trip with your family. Get out and see those sites, and for heaven's sake, swing through Iowa. Visit our Iowa-nice folks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Montana.

MONTANA

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, as we are getting ready for a busy August work period, I am very much looking forward to spending time in Big Sky Country back home in Montana, away from the swamp, enjoying the beautiful State that I am so lucky to call home.

In between meetings, I am taking a few days to enjoy Montana's great outdoors, including spending 3 days backpacking in the Beartooth Wilderness with my sweet wife Cindy and a couple of our dogs. As an avid outdoorsman, I was raised to appreciate our public lands, and I can assure you, nothing beats going off the grid for a bit, where there is no cell phone coverage on top of the peaks, with my sweetheart and a couple of our pups and enjoying Montana's beauty, the fly rod with an elk hair caddis and chasing cut and sometimes even goldens in Montana's highest lakes.

I will also be spending a lot of time on the road traveling all over Montana. I get to each of Montana's 56 counties every congressional period, to every corner of our State, from West Butte down to Ekalaka, even Alzada, over in Monida, up to the northwest corner of our State to places like Libby, Troy, and even Yaak.

I will also work to get to one of my favorite places in Montana, the famous Jersey Lilly in Ingomar. This place is not well known. It is off the beaten path. But the Jersey Lilly in Ingomar, MT, is home to the best bean soup in Big Sky Country. If you ever find yourself in east central Montana, Rosebud County, you have to get off of Highway 12 and stop in. I have known the owners of that restaurant for many years—Boots and June. There is a Montana name for you—"Boots." They not only serve up great food and even better conversation, they are also yet another example of a local family business—the bedrock of our small towns and counties across Montana. The fine folks over at the Jersey Lilly are what Montana is all about. It is about hard work, family values, passion for their community, and passion for our great country. I am a proud and frequent customer of the Jersey Lilly, and I can't wait for the next bowl of bean soup.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

MISSOURI

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, first of all, I wanted to talk about everything you could be doing in Missouri in the next month or so with your family, and then I was told I have 5 minutes. That seems to be an impossible restriction for me. So let me see how many things

I can talk about here as we end the summer travel season. But there are other people traveling after the summer. Some families still have their summer vacation. Some schools start after Labor Day, some before. I am sure I will be leaving things out that I will be glad to talk about at a later time. Let me first just mention a couple of our national parks.

If you leave my hometown of Springfield, MO, and you head west, pretty quickly you get to the Wilson's Creek National Battlefield park. There was a battle in August of 1861. Several thousand people fought who really weren't prepared to fight. They weren't trained. They weren't ready. It was a big battle that made a big difference in what happened in Missouri in the war.

Not too far from there, you get to Diamond, MO, where there is the George Washington Carver National Monument. It is a 240-acre park on the farm where George Washington Carver grew up. He was born as a slave but was quickly freed and raised by the older White couple who lived there. He managed to get to school there a little bit and in those years after the Civil War became a leading scientist and spokesman for agriculture in the country. This monument was established in 1943, and it was the first national park dedicated to an African American.

I have to circle back a little bit to get to Branson. With 50 theaters in Branson, there are more theater seats than Broadway. It is never too early to find a show you want to see in Branson.

In Silver Dollar City, in the summer of last year, their great park was named the No. 1 Christmas venue in America to visit.

Now back to my hometown of Springfield, which is the way this comes up on my list. It is the home of Bass Pro Shops. The Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium right there by Bass Pro was named "America's Best Aquarium" by USA TODAY Travel last year. That museum has 3,000 fish, birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibious animals there.

A park we just added to our National Park System—I will pop right up to almost St. Louis, to St. Genevieve, where you have French architecture that dates back to the 1700s. This is the first summer that there has been a full-time park person there. This park is rising out of what the community has preserved so well for so long. There are a number of houses there that reflect that early French architecture along the Mississippi River.

South of there, at Perryville, is the full-sized replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. There have been some traveling memorials, and there are a couple of memorials that are miniature in some way, but in Perryville, MO, you can see a full-sized replica on a 47-acre family farm that Jim Eddleman and his family made possible, along with other donations. I was there not too long ago, and I was at the Vietnam Wall here not too long ago.

They are in different places, but they are the same wall, exactly the same size, with the same names, and are the same in every way.

On the other side of our State, in Kansas City, is the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. Just this week, Senator Kaine and I introduced legislation for a memorial coin to benefit the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City. Congressmen CLEAVER and STIVERS in the House did the same thing.

While you are in Kansas City here at the end of the centennial of World War I, the World War I Museum in Kansas City was the World War I Memorial dedicated in the 1920s. It is the No. 1 place in America to visit and think about the war and the impact of that war in the 100 years that have passed since then.

If you want to go north to St. Joseph, you, of course, pass some baseball stadiums and football fields that are good places to visit if you are there at the right time. In St. Joseph, there is the Pony Express Museum. The Pony Express didn't last very long, but it became a very important part of the lore of the West, these young riders—before the telegraph—taking a message as quickly as they could ride and changing from one rider to another to go from St. Joe to California.

I wouldn't want to leave out the Mark Twain Boyhood Home in Hannibal. There was a time when Mark Twain was by far the best-read American author anywhere in the world. Hannibal is the setting for the classic American novel "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."

We will circle right back down to the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. More than 135 million people have visited the arch since 1963. It just went through a major overhaul and a 60-year renewal of the facility, better connecting it to downtown. It is the first example of what the National Park Service hopes will be the next century of the park, a true public-private partnership.

In going to all these places, we drove by lots of lakes and lots of fishing and boating. There are a lot of things to do in our State. Like many States, tourism is our second biggest industry. We look forward to people visiting us this summer and next year and the years after that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

TENNESSEE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to participate today and talk a little bit about my State of Tennessee. I will tell you, as we are talking about what we are going to do and how we are going to be working across our State during the August work period and how we are looking forward to having people visit our State during that time, one of the things that strikes me so very often when people talk about Tennessee and when they hear that I am from Tennessee, they will stop and say: That is

one of the most beautiful States. Our State is beautiful, with its rivers, lakes, rolling hills, mountains, and the flatlands over toward Memphis. Indeed, it is beautiful. It is also very long, and that is also quite remarkable to people when they start to drive through the State. They say: I spent a whole day driving through the State of Tennessee. From the time they enter up around Mountain City and Bristol and make their way through to Memphis, it does really take the whole day.

I think one of the things that interest people when they cross into Tennessee as they are going down I-81 is seeing the Bristol Motor Speedway. They realize that it is truly a feat of engineering—NASCAR is very popular—and realize the innovation and creativity that has gone into creating that speedway. Then to be there on race day, I will tell you, that is something that is quite amazing, to see those cars speeding around those banked turns and realize it is people who are handling these feats of engineering.

People also appreciate, in addition to the Bristol Motor Speedway and car racing, that Tennessee is a State that is very important to the automotive industry. You have Volkswagen in Chattanooga, and you have the GM facility at Spring Hill. Nissan North America's headquarters are located in Cold Springs, right outside of Nashville. Their manufacturing plant is in Smyrna. You have the Toyota plant that is over in West Tennessee.

We Tennesseans are also excited about the prospect of having an aerospace park that is going to be in East Tennessee, up at the Tri-Cities. As a member of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, I have had the privilege of working with the Tri-Cities Airport and local officials to make that a destination and to make it a reality.

A little further down in the State, as you get on I-40, you will find yourself in the middle of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the most visited park in our National Parks System. Senator ALEXANDER and I are continuing the work to designate the Dean Stone Bridge on the Foothills Parkway there in Blount County. Dean Stone was a pillar of the community, and naming the bridge in honor of him is the perfect way to thank him for his dedication in improving the lives of all those who live and enjoy the Smokies in that part of our State.

The Smokies are second in my heart to just one Tennessee landmark in Nashville that I think everyone wants to see. They are all country music fans, and they want to see the mother church of country music, which is the Ryman Auditorium. The best singers and songwriters in the world leave their stadiums and their festivals because they want to have the opportunity to play just one song on the stage of the Ryman Auditorium. It is a wonderful place to be and to celebrate

Tennessee's creativity and to celebrate the music that fills our hearts and our lives.

When I was a Member in the House, I worked tirelessly for several years and fought for the unanimous passage of the Music Modernization Act. That is something that fixed a lot of loopholes that were in U.S. law that adversely impacted our songwriters as they were facing copyright many times.

Upon coming to the Senate, I worked with Senator FEINSTEIN, continuing the fight on behalf of our songwriters to close the loopholes that exempt broadcast radio from paying royalties to music creators.

Tennessee is also known for some other wonderful music, a little bit further down I-40, and that is the blues. You can't leave the State of Tennessee without going through Memphis and having a visit over on Beale Street, right there on the banks of the mighty Mississippi.

The Mississippi River is our Nation's original superhighway, if you will. It is vitally important, not only to river but to rail, air, and highway transportation networks. All of these have found their way along West Tennessee's river lands.

Shipping and logistics giant FedEx has its corporate headquarters in Memphis. Memphis is the city of their founding and their headquarters location, and that takes advantage of Memphis International Airport and their cargo operations center.

All that being said, one of the things that individuals repeatedly comment on when they talk about Tennessee is how nice the people are in Tennessee, how welcoming they are, and how they engage you and want to make certain that you come back.

You will find in Tennessee a very diverse community. Yes, we are the home to artists and athletes. We are the home to engineers, to farmers, to doctors, to soldiers, and to veterans. It is, indeed, one of the best places on the face of the Earth to call home and, indeed, a certain not-to-be-missed destination for all Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ALASKA

Ms. MURKOWSKI. My colleagues have been to the floor here for the past little bit talking about various road trips in their State and destinations, including their favorite destinations. When you think about where your favorite place is, it is like saying which son is your favorite son. We all have our favorite places all around our State.

I got to thinking about road trips. I thought, well, road trips in Alaska perhaps take a little bit of a different meaning than in other States. We all

know the State I come from because we talk about it a lot. Senator SULLIVAN and I come from a big State. We have over 663,000 square miles, but within those 663,000 square miles, we don't have a lot of roads. Over 82 percent of the communities in the State of Alaska are not connected by roads. We are not part of the road system. So traveling in Alaska can be a little bit of an adventure. Flexibility is always key.

More often than not, when you are in a big State, you move around from town to town, and you rely on the commercial carriers. You rely on Alaska Airlines. You rely on Ravn. You rely on some of the others. We pretty much move around by air.

But sometimes it is impossible to get around by air all the time. Sometimes we have what I call "forest road trips." It is not that I don't want to be on our roads, but once you get on the roads, you are on them for a fairly long time. Sometimes the jets don't fly. Sometimes the jets don't fly because you have bad weather. Sometimes the jets don't fly because you have a volcano that goes off.

I was holding a field hearing in Fairbanks and needed to get down to Anchorage, and Pavlof blew. Pavlof is one of our more active volcanos, and it shuts down the air space. What was going to be a 45-minute trip home turned out to be a 359-mile drive home—7 hours—that evening.

We had another trip going out of Valdez to Anchorage, and we needed to get back to Anchorage that night, but the fog and the wind in Valdez said there are no planes coming in to take you out, and they might not be there the next day and they might not be there the next day after that. There is bad weather. The pass is shutting down so you better move now. When that happens, you get in a car and 300 miles later—5 hours later—you are in Anchorage.

I had Senator MANCHIN with me just over the Fourth of July break. We were headed from Anchorage to King Salmon to attend a ribbon-cutting for a National Park Service facility. We got fogged out in the morning and waited for hours in the airport, and then we got word that the fog had lifted, and we were getting ready to get on a plane and they called a mechanical. If there is a mechanical, I am with you, and we just don't fly. Senator MANCHIN turned to me and said: I know it is a long way, but can't we just drive there?

That was my opportunity to turn to my colleague in another learning moment and tell him: No, this is one of those 82 percent of our communities where there is no road. So JOE, we are not flying.

Aviation really is our lifeline here. If you are not on Alaska Airlines, you are on one of our many bush carriers. This is a picture of a pilot I had an opportunity to fly with, Eric, who is the pilot and owner of Arctic Backcountry Flying Service. This is his Cessna 206. More often than not, these are the type

of aircraft that we are in. We are not flying in some fancy leased jet. We are in a small aircraft, what we call a bush carrier. That is when we have airstrips that we can land on.

But we don't have airstrips in many of our communities. What we do is we come in and out on the water on our floatplanes. Some people call them seaplanes out here. We call them floatplanes.

Here is a picture of me and Secretary Perry on Kodiak Island. We had flown over on Alaska Airlines. But to get around the island, you either take a boat or fly in a floatplane. We were flying over to Old Harbor there on Kodiak Island, but we got around on the water.

Sometimes you don't have the water though. In a place like Alaska, what we do have in the wintertime is a fair amount of snow. You take your floats off and you put your skis on. You can see the wheels there. This plane can land in Anchorage and take off in Anchorage on the wheels, but when you are up on Ruth Glacier, as this Cessna 185 is, you are landing on skis. That gets your attention because it is a little bit different than a floatplane, but it gets you in and out of what you need to get in and out of.

There are some places, though, where you don't have an airstrip, a floatplane can't land, and the only way to really get in and out is by helicopter.

Little Diomed Island sits out in the middle of the Bering Straits. It is 2 miles from Big Diomed. Big Diomed is owned by Russia. Little Diomed is owned by us. There are about 150-plus people who live out there on Diomed. They have a school, and they have a community center, but how do they get the mail? People move in and out by helicopter. The mail is delivered by helicopter. There are a few weeks in the wintertime—maybe, sometimes, as much as a couple of months—when the ocean freezes over and they can make a strip where a plane can land on the ice. But most of the year, you fly in and out on helicopter. So we fly.

The other way we get around when we don't have a lot of roads is on our rivers. One thing that Alaska is blessed with is a lot of rivers. We have 365,000 miles of rivers. That makes for a lot of roads because in the summertime, those rivers are our roads.

This is a picture upriver in the village of Napaskiak. There are about 500 people there. We had Attorney General Barr with us in May. We took him upriver. This is how he traveled. These are the Bethel Search and Rescue boats there. They are not fancy boats. They are not yachts. These are functional. They have decent motors on them because these are workhorses. Yet how we travel in the summer is up and down these rivers.

In the summer, it makes it possible to move around these communities. In the winter, you move around by snow machine. You have trucks and you have vehicles out there as well. When the rivers freeze, you then have your

frozen highway, and you can have 100 miles of it. The Kuskokwim, I think, plowed out 250 miles of road on the river.

This is a frozen river. This is actually a picture that was taken when we took Secretary Moniz from Bethel to Oscarville. We had with us about four other Members of the Senate because we had a field hearing for the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. We held it out there in Oscarville, and we had a motorcade on ice. It was basically about six trucks that went down the river, but the Secretary said it was his first official truck motorcade on ice. That really does allow us to get around when the rivers are frozen over.

Down in the southeastern part of the State, where I was born and spent a lot of my growing-up years, they are all islanded communities. There are 32 or 33 islanded communities in the southeast. So to move around, we either fly Alaska Airlines, fly smaller carriers, or we rely on our Alaska marine highway system, our ferry system. This is our marine lifeline. This is how we move freight, how we move vehicles, how we move goods, and how we move people.

Right now, our very system is threatened on a host of different levels, which really hurts my heart because, as one who knows how dependent we are on being able to move on the water, this is our road, and these types of vessels can move us in ways that are efficient. The marine highway system is our road. So we are working in the State right now to address it. Again, this is one more way that I do my road trips when I am back home in the State.

In the interior, you have communities, again, that are isolated. There is no road system that gets you there. There are small villages, Arctic villages, that are about 500 people strong.

I was in an Arctic village just in July, and this is how I was picked up at the airport. There are not many trucks. There are basically four-wheelers. There are ATVs, and everybody just hops on. This was my driver for the day. Again, you just hop on the back and ride.

Then, there are some communities in which, really, the way that you get around is not on a road and not on a sidewalk but on just a wooden trail, a wooden boardwalk. This is the village of Napaskiak. This is out in the Bethel region, in the Y-K Delta. These are just planks that are put down on top of the tundra because the area is so marshy that you cannot walk on it. You would need hip waders to be better able to travel through it. Just walking around on the boardwalk is the extent of your road trip in a place like Nunam Iqua or Napaskiak.

Whether it is freedom to be on a frozen river or freedom to be out on the Arctic Ocean, wintertime gives us a little bit more freedom. This is a picture of me with a friend, off of Utqiagvik, which is on the Arctic Ocean. It looks like a lot of fun. We were going out

snow-machining. We were going out to work because the community had harvested a whale, and the whaling crew and the community were taking their snow machines out to load the muktuk onto sleds to haul back to the community so it could be shared as part of their subsistence food. So we were going out to help the community harvest that whale. This is not fun and recreation. It is your means of transportation. This is your workhorse.

We do have a little bit of fun every now and again. Everyone asks: Do you ever travel around by dog sled? That is my dream. That would be the next career opportunity for me. I would love to run the Iditarod, and I would love to have my own dog team, but, right now, I don't have enough hours in my day. Yet, every now and again, you can hop on the back of a dog sled.

I am looking forward to being back home and traveling around the State, visiting from Ketchikan to Barrow. It is 4,000 miles for Senator SULLIVAN, Congressman YOUNG, and me to get back and forth between Washington, DC, and Alaska. I have kind of mapped out my trip for the month ahead. Once I get back to Alaska, in that first couple of weeks, I will have doubled that airtime, if you will. Then, with the additional travel that we have toward the end of August, I am looking at about 15,000 miles of travel within my State.

I know many of my colleagues are going to exotic locations that will take them to places that will be a long, long ways away. Yet I am just reminded every day of the privilege and the honor of being able to travel through an extraordinary State like Alaska, where we use a little bit of everything to get us to where we need to go in order to visit some of the finest Americans whom I know and am blessed to be able to serve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

OKLAHOMA

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, August is coming quickly. It is the time that we have a gap in the legislative calendar. As this body knows well, Congress is in session for 11 months of the year. We have one month in which we are not in Washington, DC, which gives us the opportunity to be home and to, quite frankly, catch up with family but also to be able to travel around our States, see what is going on in our States, and talk to folks.

I happen to live in an unbelievably beautiful State. In August, Oklahoma is crazy hot and humid, but it is a great time to get a chance to see people and to see what is going on.

In just the few weeks around this time period, I have already been to Ada and Durant and Calera, and I will be heading quickly to Chickasha, Lindsay, Lawton, Vinita, Miami—that is not “Miami—ee”; the correct pronunciation is “Miami—ah”—Afton, Grove, Jay, Chelsea, Hennessey, Enid, up to Kaw Lake, and, of course, all around the

Oklahoma City area and all around Tulsa, to spend as much time as I can with as many different people as I can to find out what is going on in Oklahoma. I get this one precious month a year to make sure I have focus time in the State to see as many people as I can.

I got to thinking about this and the privilege that I have really had in being able to travel around my State and see so many people and so many places, to get on Route 66, travel the State from east to west, and see exactly what is going on.

I have had the opportunity to be out at the E.W. Marland Mansion in Ponca City. I have had the opportunity to be at Roman Nose State Park in Watonga. I have climbed up to the top of Black Mesa in Kenton, and I have been to the lowest point, by sea level, in far southeast Oklahoma in Broken Bow. I have been out to Mount Scott in Lawton and have climbed on its tumbled rocks. I have been to the Blue Whale in Catoosa.

I have had the great privilege of getting a chance to walk around through the Gathering Place in Tulsa. This is an absolutely spectacular park and gathering place. In fact, USA Today just named it the No. 1 new attraction in America. For folks who have not been to Tulsa or for the folks who have been to Tulsa before, they need to go back and just enjoy the Gathering Place.

I have had the opportunity to walk the streets around Black Wall Street and to visit with the fine folks who are there. I have had the opportunity to be in Davis at Turner Falls and the Arbuckle Mountains, and, of course, Falls Creek. I have had the opportunity to be in Hochatown, which is down near Broken Bow Lake, and the chance just to enjoy the time there, around the tall trees, in beautiful southeast Oklahoma. I have had the opportunity to visit Lake Murray State Park in Ardmore and visit the Ole Red restaurant in Tishomingo. I have driven the Talimena National Scenic Byway in the fall and have seen the spectacular scenery in those mountains. I have been to the Robbers Cave in Wilburton and the Ouachita National Forest in McCurtain County.

I have had the opportunity to walk around through the Heavener Runestone area and see the Norse Viking carved stones that are there in eastern Oklahoma. I could see, most definitely, by far, amongst those high trees and those rolling hills, that I wasn't the first person to go there.

I have been to the Round Barn, off Route 66 in Arcadia. I have stopped to get a great hamburger at Pop's, which is there on Route 66. I have quietly stood at the national Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial in downtown Oklahoma City, and I have seen the amazing western art at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. I have walked through the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame and the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

You can't go through Oklahoma without stopping at Cattlemen's Steakhouse and enjoying a great steak or without driving out west to see the Stafford Air & Space Museum. People who travel to Washington, DC, go to the Air and Space Museum, and I will often smile at them and say: Do not miss the Air & Space Museum that is in Weatherford, OK, because the Stafford Air & Space Museum has a remarkable collection from a fantastic Oklahoma astronaut.

The Great Salt Plains in Jet and the Oklahoma Territorial Museum in Guthrie are also really remarkable places.

I do have to brag about a spot because, on my 50th birthday, my wife surprised me by our taking a trip to the Little Sahara State Park and the sand dunes in northern Oklahoma. We rented dune buggies and drove them as hard and fast as we wanted on that day. It was a great day to just enjoy Oklahoma. It was just like the day I was able to drive to Pawhuska and eat at the Pioneer Woman Mercantile restaurant and just enjoy the downtown area.

It is really a fantastic State, and the people and the places that I miss while I am here in Washington, DC, for 11 months of the year I look forward to getting a chance to see when I get back home in August. With as much work as we have to get done here—and we still have a lot of work to get done—we will spend some time on the phone, we will walk through legislation, and we will continue to do writing. Yet, thankfully, I will be able to write and spend time on the phone while I look out my windshield and enjoy some Oklahoma scenery at the same time.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, pursuant to yesterday's authority, the Senate will now vote on the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 48, 55, and 351.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report Calendar No. 48.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Karin J. Immergut, of Oregon, to be United States District Judge for the District of Oregon.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Immergut nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I oppose the confirmation of U.S. District Court nominee Karin Immergut. She went through the committee confirmation process in 2018, before I joined the Senate Judiciary Committee, and subsequently, she was part of a package of judges who were renominated and voted out earlier this year. I later learned that the nominee had issued a questionable abortion opinion and is pro-choice.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report Calendar No. 55.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John Milton Younge, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Younge nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report Calendar No. 351.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Mary M. Rowland, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Rowland nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, at 3 p.m. today, the Senate will vote on confirmations of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 205, 231, 232, 345, 350, 364, and 402.

I ask unanimous consent that if the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Executive Calendar No. 205 is the pending question.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Pittman nomination?

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.